

the
crimson
thread

OF REDEMPTION

Seeing the Cross in the Old Testament



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The Bible is a book about **redemption**. God wants to communicate this story to us through His Word. He does this by giving us many smaller stories that illustrate the wonderful truth of the redemption provided through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The central theme of redemption in Scripture is that:

God has taken the initiative to act compassionately on behalf of those who are powerless to help themselves.

One day, when [Joseph] went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, [Potiphar's wife] caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. (Genesis 39:11-12)

While the ultimate outcome of Joseph's faithfulness was glorious, the immediate outcome was painful, and that is our focus in the story today. Please open your Bible at Genesis 39. We begin at verse 13.

1. Joseph refuses the advances of Potiphar's wife.
2. Potiphar's wife brings a false accusation against Joseph.
3. Joseph loses his job and ends up in prison.

Notice the ups and downs

- Loved and Favored (by God and by his father, Jacob)
- Hated and Despised (by his brothers)
- Blessed and Successful (by Potiphar)
- Tempted and Faithful (by Potiphar's wife)
- Trusted and Accused. (by Potiphar's & his wife)
- Suffering and Serving (in prison)
- Wise and Discerning (understanding God's greater purpose)

Let's look at the story through the eyes of the three players: Potiphar's wife, Potiphar, and Joseph.

Potiphar's Wife: Spreading the Lie

Pure love vs. selfish love

Selfish love is easily changed to a sinful hatred, and the deepest venom in the human heart is often directed toward friends, or churches, or employers we once said we loved.

Here's a helpful prayer:

"Lord, deliver me from the sinful love that so easily becomes hatred when I don't get my way. I don't want to be that person. Teach me more of the love of Christ that goes on loving even when it is slighted or wounded."

Potiphar's wife only knew one kind of love, and when she did not get her way, the true nature of her heart was revealed. She did great evil towards Joseph. She robbed him of his good name. She had him put out of his job. What she did was a great sin and a great injustice. This speaks to the whole issue of injustice that stalks our world today. The Bible shows us the ugliness of sin so that we can see it for what it is, and then do everything in our power to keep ourselves from it. The redemptive nature of the Gospel message is woven into this story... As dark and ugly as sin can be, His love and grace are more beautiful still!

Three parts to her evil:

1. Sowing disaffection

2. Repeating the lie (Genesis 39:14-15)

First, Potiphar's wife tells the lie to the servants. She puts it out to them so that people are talking about this story before Potiphar comes home.

She presents Joseph as a villain

She also presents herself as a woman of virtue.

She covers Joseph in the shame of false accusation

She covers herself in a cloak of pretended innocence.

The Bible tells us that Satan is the ‘father of lies,’ and that lies are his ‘native language’ (Jn. 8:44 NIV). Lies are the devil’s language. **Every lie carries the echo of his voice.** That’s true of lies when we accuse another person of something that may not be true, and it is true when we pretend to have a virtue that we do not possess.

The Bible says, categorically, that “all liars” end up in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). So, if we take this seriously, we must make it our business to turn from lies, and to pursue the truth in every area of our lives.

3. Passing blame

“The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me.” (Genesis 39:17)

You see what she is saying, “Potiphar, this is all your fault! Now what are you going to do about it?”

So here are sins with which we must have nothing to do – sowing the seeds of disaffection, repeating a lie, and passing blame. We must see their ugliness. We must remember that they are sins which are condemned forever in hell.

Potiphar: Suppressing the Truth

Did Potiphar believe his wife’s story? There are several indications that at the very least he had his doubts.

1) Potiphar did not have Joseph killed. (In this we see the protecting hand of God, but we may also see Potiphar’s doubt over his wife’s story).

2) Some time later, when the King’s cupbearer and baker were put in the prison beside Joseph, we are told that the captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them (Gen. 40:4). Potiphar himself was the captain of the guard (Gen. 37:46). So, it seems clear from this action that Potiphar still trusted and respected Joseph.

3) When Potiphar's wife told her story, the Scripture says of Potiphar that "his anger was kindled" (Gen. 39:19). It does not say that Potiphar was angry with Joseph, just that he was angry.

Truth suppression didn't start or stop with Potiphar: Consider Pilate

Consider people today:

There is enough light in the creation around us for every person on the planet to know there is a living God and he has great power. Somewhere deep in our hearts we know this. But we suppress the truth (Rom. 1:18). We push it down; push it away. We exchange the truth about God for a lie (Rom. 1:25). Why would we do that? Because if there is a God, I must find out what he requires of me, and that may put me in an uncomfortable position.

And the Bible says that is what we all do by nature. We suppress the truth because, like Potiphar and like Pilate, we don't like the position that the truth would put us in.

Joseph: Standing by Faith

Joseph had been in a pit before, and now he was there again. Only this time it was worse. Psalm 105:18 tells us, "His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron."

This was surely the lowest point in Joseph's life. What has been the lowest point in your life? God was blessing you and then you were cut down. You were working hard, and the reward you got was that false things were said about you and people who were once your friends turned against you. God was blessing you and then what he had given was taken away, and suddenly you found yourself in great darkness.

God passes over every reference to what Joseph felt, because he wants to direct our attention to something else: How Joseph got through. How did Joseph survive? How did he keep walking with God through all this pain and sorrow and loss and injustice?

God's presence

The Lord was with Joseph and he showed him steadfast love. (Genesis 39:21)

God went to prison with Joseph. God was with Joseph in the lowest point of his life, in the darkest place. One author says, "Think not that the presence of God with His people is limited to palaces or to churches. It has often been manifestly seen that He was with them in prisons, in caves or dens, on gibbets, and in fiery furnaces."

God goes with his people to the lowest point. God will be with you, "I will never leave you; I will never forsake you." – not at the lowest point, not at any point in your life.

God's promise

Joseph had been given a dream. It had come to him with all the power of the Word of God. God had revealed the future to Joseph. So when this man comes to the lowest point of his life, Joseph could say, "God is with me here and it doesn't end here. It can't end here because I have the promise of God. And what God promises he always fulfills."

God's purpose

The LORD was with Joseph... and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed. (Genesis 39:21-23)

Matthew Henry says, "A good man will do good wherever he is." [4] Out of Joseph's suffering comes a remarkable ministry. The blessing of God is on Joseph, and wherever Joseph goes, he brings this blessing with him.

If God brings me to the lowest place, let me be the person who brings his blessing to others who come there. If God brings me to a place of sorrow,

let me be the one who ministers to others who sorrow. If God brings me a place of loss, let me use that to bring his blessing to others who experience loss. If God allows me to face false accusation, let me reach out to others who suffer the same injustice. The hardest things in your life may open the door to the most fruitful ministry in your life.

Put Your Name Here

Put your story in here. You worked hard and you were blessed by God. You sought to live with integrity and to honor the Lord by your commitment to walk by his commandments, but then you were cut down. Your life changed, and it happened so quickly that it took your breath away. But God is with you, and his promise stands firm. And God has a purpose for you even in your suffering, and he can use you even in your loss.

Christian brother or sister, no lie, however vicious or injustice, however perverse, can ever take the presence of God from you. No loss can ever thwart his great and loving purpose for your life. God's promise stands sure. God's great purpose for you and through you will be accomplished. All his promises are 'yes' and 'amen' because of Christ Jesus. Redemption is His theme!